

 r/HFY · Posted by u/im\_alliterate 4 hours ago

## The Duality of Tiamat

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"Our duality...." The human's voice trailed off and the translator crackled in its wake. Her eyes closed and she started again, "I am not sure any of you realizes what has been set in motion, what will come to be...what it will truly cost." Her melancholy filled my olfactory receptors. Permeating and powerful, yet tranquil, it had a fragrance similar to their frankincense, borne of what they called West Asia. Of the human emotions our coalition's diplomats learned while studying their biology, sorrow was renowned as their most beautiful. Such depth to it.

I opened my eyes and the purple particles of her sadness danced slowly around her as it spread throughout the room. Awe and confusion filled me. "Minister, I do not understand. The Great Powers of Andromeda rejoice as one. After the attack on your Andromedan colony, humanity intends to join our cause."

She let out a sigh. Exasperation.

"Let me tell you about the first great empire of Earth. They were born of a fertile valley between two rivers with no natural defenses. Bountiful grains and stocks of fish filled its corners. Every nation in the known world invaded and pillaged that beautiful land for eons, and its peoples suffered. Yet, one city in the north of that great valley rose from the chaos and carnage. The spitting image of strength and stoicism, their armies stopped the invaders and stabilized the entire region. They built gigantic cities and walls. Their roads, protected and vast, spread throughout the known world bringing all manners of trade and commerce to the far corners. Agriculture, the arts, technology, the written word, and religious traditions all flourished under their watchful eyes. They united countless nations under one banner. The valley's populations grew to numbers no one thought possible til that time. Humanity *thrived*." The Minister paused.

I could not resist, "But, Minister! This is precisely why humanity is so critical to our cause!" She ignored my interjection and continued.

"Kings of the World, Kings of Assyria. During their reigns, each King would write the same inscription in Akkadian, cuneiform writing that looks as harsh as their tongue sounds. Each inscription would finish the same, '*From its Foundation to its top, build it, complete it.*'" She paused, and as I began to interject to highlight the good of what she spoke, her palm rose. The purple particles emanating from her had shifted to a light, glowing yellow, teetering on gold. Agitation, a transitory emotion that would lead to yet another. The smell shifted from frankincense to that of their lightly smoldering charcoals.

"The Great Kings only took power upon slaying a Mesopotamian Lion, the fiercest and most breathtaking animal to roam the great valley in its day. Those same nuanced, cultured builders of civilization would start their inscriptions with, '*I destroyed, I*

*devastated, I burned with fire,' as they sacked resisting kingdoms, slayed their inhabitants, and tore their once shining cities apart, stone by stone, body by body. Entire peoples were enslaved, or impaled on spikes. Rivers ran red with blood. Their temples and great palaces were reduced to rubble. Assyrian armies would not rest until the lands of any resisting nation met the same fate as that of the Elamites, lush lands made into barren wastelands, fertile soil sown with salt. The Kings even commissioned artisans to depict such wonton disregard and violence to adorn their great throne rooms to remind subjugated vassals and foreign dignitaries alike of Assyrian power and, more importantly, their cruelty. From Thebes to Kanish to Susa, Assyria reigned for one thousand years. Human progress leaped lightyears forward, reaching new heights."*

The room glowed fire red now with a metallic smell. Stress, anger. Humans called the hormone of their flowing through her now, cortisol. Stress likewise began to percolate through my body as she drew her next breath.

*"But at what cost?"* Her translator's static rose as if it were a pitch, highlighting the tension.

"Those Great Kings, those Great Conquerors. They initially acted out of survival. Ashur, Nineveh, and Dur Sharrukin rose from the ashes of a Mesopotamia burned again and again at the hands of murderous invaders. Their grief at losing their loved ones, the great chasms in their souls, drove them to heights never seen before, spilling the blood of their enemies and innocents alike in turn. It was as if Tiamat herself possessed them. Human civilization, you see, is always built upon the ashes of our enemies."

"What do you think will happen when images of our star fleets being blown to hell and our foot soldiers dying at the tentacles of Heptalopod warriors are broadcast to our home worlds? The grief borne of what we've lost, which comes in wave after unsuspecting wave for each individual person until they take their own last breath, will transform into the hatred of a thousand burning stars and the cold determination of a far flung, icy exoplanet. And we, too, will come in wave after unsuspecting wave. Andromedan solar systems will burn. Billions will perish. *'Scored Earth'* will mean something to you then. There is a *reason* no being challenges our hegemony in the Milky Way. There is a *reason* we pledged neutrality upon our incorporation into the Andromedan Alliance."

The static crackling returned. The metallic smell shifted once more towards frankincense again. The red glow gave way to purple and her gloom returned. I could only listen.

"You drew us into this war because you say you want an end to hostilities. You say you want peace. You say you want stability. But, *at what cost?* We do *not* know how to *stop*. Our grief, our anger, they are never quenched. With all due respect, sir, this is not a joyous occasion. For all you've done is awaken Tiamat. And you will tremble before her and her fleets."

The room flared pink though she could not see or smell it. For fear, my fear, filled the room.